

THE BAPTIST Record

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Evangelism Conference set for Jan. 26-27

By William H. Perkins Jr.
 Editor

The 2004 Mississippi State Evangelism Conference, themed Tell Your Story (John 14:6), will be held January 26-27 at Country Woods Church, Byram. A special Women's Track will also be held again this year in conjunction with the main conference.

"Everyone has a story, different yet still the same — Jesus came into our lives and changed us. The 2004 Mississippi State Evangelism Conference is designed to tell those many stories," said S.A. (Sonny) Adkins, director of evangelism for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

The first service will begin at 1:30 p.m. on January 26, followed by a 6:30 p.m. service. On January 27, the conference will continue with a 9 a.m. service and conclude with a 1:30 p.m. service. Featured speakers for the conference include:

- Gary Bowlin, vocational evangelist from Summit.
- Randall Creel, vocational evangelist from Forest.

- Price Harris, vocational evangelist from Shreveport, La.

- Ken Hemphill, national strategist for Empowering Kingdom Growth, a Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) program of the SBC Executive Committee and LifeWay Christian Resources.

- Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Church Woodstock in Woodstock, Ga.

- James Merritt, pastor of Cross Pointe The Church at Gwinnett Center in Duluth, Ga. Merritt is a past president of the SBC and formerly pastored Highland Church, Laurel.

- Jerry Pipes, vocational evangelist from Lawrenceville, Ga.

- Jerry Young, pastor of New Hope Church in Jackson.

Providing worship and praise during the conference will be:

- Becky Carver, accompanist from Mathiston.

- Ronnie Cottingham, vocational evangelist from Lucedale.

- Jim Farrish, minister of music at Country Woods Church, Byram.

- Luke Garrett, soloist from Jackson.

- The Hill Family, vocational evangelists from Laurel.

- David Oliver, associate pastor of praise and worship at Crossgates Church, Brandon.

- Ken Patterson, minister of music and education at Fifteenth Avenue Church, Meridian.

The Women's Track at the conference has been designed by the Women's Visionary Team of the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) to address the special demands of women's evangelism and ministry programs, Adkins said. Program personalities include:

- Laura Leathers of Hidden Treasures Ministry in Pickens.

- Mandisa Hundley, vocalist for the praise team of nationally-recognized speaker Beth Moore of Houston, Texas.

- Page Hughes of Anchor Deep Ministries in Alabaster, Al.

- Ewilda Fancher of Florence, communications volunteer for Mississippi WMU.

- Corinne Gillentine, women's ministry Bible teacher from Hattiesburg.

- Cyndi Grace, women's ministry Bible leader from Satartia.

"The main conference will be held in the church's worship center. The Women's Track will be held in the church's fellowship hall. The two groups will meet together at 6:30 p.m. on January 26 for the evening service of the evangelism conference," Adkins said.

Adkins expressed thanks to the officers of the Conference of Mississippi Baptist Evangelists, who helped put together the conference program, and Mississippi WMU, which helped design the Women's Track. The annual evangelism conference is supported by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

For more information on the conference, contact Adkins at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3278 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 278. E-mail: jellis@mbcb.org.



Oliver



Creel



Harris



Bowlin



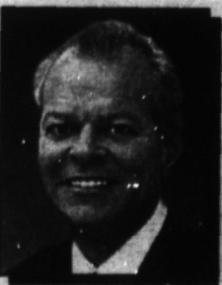
Merritt



Hemphill



Farrish



Hunt



Garrett



Gillentine



Grace



Fancher



Leathers



Hughes



Hundley



Cottingham



The Hill Family

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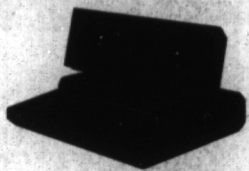
MISSISSIPPI
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HAPPY NEW YEAR



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America's fetal pestilence

No one said it would be easy, fighting the war being waged against the unborn in America — but with the institution of newly-passed federal and state laws dealing with various aspects of abortion such as waiting periods, education programs, clinic inspections, and the ghastly partial birth procedure, it seems the country is making incremental progress in recognizing the horrors of unbridled abortion.

The enemies of the unborn are forever vigilant, however, in seeking ways to exterminate new life as if it were a fetal pestilence. As revulsion to surgical abortion grew, the chemical abortifacient known as RU 486 was supposed to bypass the need for surgical abortion by using a witch's brew of potent hormones and toxic cancer drugs to force the womb to expel a thriving fetus.

Now we learn that RU 486 is directly responsible for the deaths of many young women who sought to terminate their pregnancies in this way. The public is beginning to wake up and as sentiment builds for closer regulation of RU 486 or even an outright ban, another human pesticide has been proposed to take up the slack.

An advisory panel to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently recommended that a hormone regimen known as the "morning-after pill" be moved from the prescription-required list to the over-the-counter medications list. That means the regimen, which contains heavy doses of hormones to prevent the fertilized human egg from implanting in the womb, can be purchased on the same basis as cold medicine and corn pads.

Like RU 486, there is no research to indicate the long-term implications of using such massive doses of hormones over and over as a form of birth control. What is known to scientists and the FDA, however, is that overuse of hormones by women can have catastrophic consequences, including cancer.

"We're disturbed by... lack of concern on the medical safety," Wendy Wright of Concerned Women for America told CNN

after the panel's recommendation was made public. "Is this safe for women, when in fact there have been no studies done on the long-term effects on women who take the morning-after pill, and there are no studies that have been done on multiple use — if a woman uses it more than once."

Making the morning-after pill, also known by its brand name Plan B, available over-the-counter could have even more devastating effects on teens.

Reporter Rani Rabin pointed out in a recent Newsday article, "There is a danger that teenagers will pop Plan B like Tylenol. Health educators say teens are impulsive about sexual behavior and tend not to plan ahead. Yet little is known about the effect of Plan B on adolescent bodies that are still developing, experts say; girls younger than 18 are rarely if ever included in clinical trials for contraceptives. Panelists said they'd like to have post-approval surveillance to keep an eye on adverse effects that may occur, but it's hard to envision much data coming in. Remember, women taking Plan B aren't going to be under a physician's care, and it's likely they'll be secretive about what they're doing."

Plan B is already available over-the-counter in most European countries and five states in this country. Action by FDA commissioners, who are expected to agree with the advisory panel's recommendation when they meet in February, would make it available over-the-counter on a nationwide basis.

Why do so many Americans have such an aversion to unborn children? Why is it that we devote so much time and treasure to creating the pesticides and procedures that will rid us of them before they can take their first breath? What is so wrong with "unintended" pregnancies that the

"IT WOULD BE NEAT IF JESUS WOULD SHOW UP AND GIVE US SOME FISHING ADVICE THE WAY HE DID THE DISCIPLES. HUH, GRANDPA?"



only innocent party in the pregnancy has to pay with its life?

There's a simple answer, really. It is found in the words of Mother Teresa to former President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary, both avid promoters of abortion. It is a poverty, Mother Teresa boldly told the pair in a public meeting; for a little child to die so that we can live our selfish lives as we please. It is truly a poverty that America has chosen such a culture of death as abortion, so that we can do what we want without any consideration for anyone other than ourselves. Over-the-counter Plan B is simply another manifestation of that great truth.

Until we all learn to live the selfless life exemplified by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and learn to put others before ourselves, evils such as abortion will continue to plague the God-blessed land of America — toward which so much of the rest of the world looks for leadership. That puts the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) in a whole new light, doesn't it?

In this new year of 2004, let's get busy.

GUEST OPINION:



Movies, and the power to move us

By Tony Martin, Associate Editor

I recently spent a rapturous afternoon at the movies watching (participating in?) Peter Jackson's thunderous climax to the film trilogy of The Lord of the Rings. Unless you've been raising chinchillas on Venus, you can't have escaped the phenomenon of the three-movie cycle that began with The Fellowship of the Ring in 2001, The Two Towers in 2002, and now Return of the King in 2003.

Reviews have been almost universally positive, and even hard-boiled critics from Time, Newsweek, The New York Times, etc., seem to have run out of adjectives. Now, I am not the one to give an objective review; I first read J.R.R. Tolkien's half-million word opus when I was 13, and have read it every summer since. So my investment in the story is significant and not in the least rational. I went to the first installment with some reserve: Could this Jackson guy pull it off and remain faithful to the books I loved? It was a treat, then, when I was able to announce with trembling pleasure that yeah, he sure did.

Much has been written about Tolkien's strong Christian faith (and I heartily recommend the book Finding God in the Lord of the Rings, by Kurt Bruner and Jim Ware, for a fuller discussion of how his beliefs impacted his work). While Tolkien had a cordial distaste for allegory — and the book and movies never mention religion, Christ, or even God — a reader or viewer is treated to unabashed representations of a very elemental good and evil, and introduced to characters who display such virtues as courage, bravery, integrity, fidelity, and an overall sweet wholesomeness. Conversely, the villains are of the darkest and most pervasive evil.

The Return of the King has broken all box-office records for a Wednesday opening, taking in \$34.1 million in one day. How does one interpret that? Try this one on, Hollywood: people will go to great lengths to see a rip-roaring good tale, expertly told, that is full of virtue and light. I contend that even in our post-modern culture, people are attracted to a story that offers an unabashed vision of good and evil. In the wasteland that is modern Hollywood, here is a ray of light.

Upon reflection, I couldn't help but compare this movie to other recent critically acclaimed films such as The Cider House Rules (a pro-abortion screed if

there ever was one) and American Beauty (in which the main character was a pedophile). Critically acclaimed, yes, but certainly not the box office bonanzas The Lord of the Rings trilogy has become. Like moths to a flame, people are gravitating to a movie series that has some moral vision as opposed to movies that are soulless, twisted, and depraved.

Hollywood, get a clue. You people are custodians of a medium that has the power to entertain, enlighten, amuse, frighten, thrill, and move an audience to tears. As with many great forces of our time, cinema has the power to both uplift and degrade. My appeal to logic would be this: I know you West Coast folks are profit-driven. Why not use the considerable tools at your disposal to make movies that inspire? Tell us a story with excellence. Let the good guys be good guys and the bad guys be bad. If you need to show us evil in its proper context, that's fine. Just give us something to hope for in the end.

People will come.

Miss. Baptist captures prize, promises tithe

NATCHEZ, Miss. (BP) — A man who was awarded \$400,000 and enjoyed a few brief minutes of fame during halftime of the Southeastern Conference football championship game on Dec. 6 in Atlanta said he prayed for the opportunity to be a testimony of God's faithfulness and will tithe to the Mississippi Baptist church where he is a member.

Chuck Bartlett, a deacon at First Church, Natchez, entered the Throw for Dough contest after reading about it on a Diet Dr. Pepper can. He was selected as one of 10 finalists to meet in Atlanta for the chance to win one million dollars during the game at the Georgia Dome between the University of Georgia and Louisiana State University.

After winning a preliminary round on Dec. 5, Bartlett advanced to the game-day stage where he threw footballs into a giant Dr. Pepper can on the goal line.

With full pressure on, Bartlett made four of the five balls from the five yard line and then missed all five from the 10 yard line. However, he completed the bonus 30-yard pass to add another zero to the \$40,000 he had already accumulated for a total of \$400,000.

After moments of jubilation and pointing heavenward while saying, "Thank you, Jesus!" Bartlett told CBS sideline reporter Jill Arrington, "Jesus Christ gives me all the strength I need to do whatever I need." When she asked what he would do with the money, he said first he would tithe to his church and then he would give to several Christian missionary charities.

Following several days of media attention, Bartlett told



I WON! — Chuck Bartlett of First Church, Natchez, won \$400,000 in Dr. Pepper's Throw for Dough contest during the Southeastern Conference football championship game on Dec. 6 in Atlanta. Bartlett said he will use a portion of his winnings to tithe to his church. (Screen capture from CBS Sports)

Baptist Press (BP) he basically feels "real humble" and credits God for the entire victory. "After the eighth pass was thrown, I had missed three in a row, and I was so frustrated because I was letting my wife down," Bartlett said.

He explained that his wife had urged him to enter the contest and then had spent weeks praying for God to make a testimony on the field. Once Bartlett won the preliminary round, he said she read the story of David and Goliath to him seven times in the hotel room that night.

The two of them had even planned what he would say on the field even if he just won the consolation prize of \$10,000 — but God was clear to him after that eighth pass.

"God spoke to me and said, 'Don't worry. It's going to be OK. We are going to make the big pass for the testimony,'" Bartlett told BP, "and if you look back on the video, I didn't even throw

the same way the next two passes because it was like I wanted to get those two over with and get to the 30 (yard line).

"Then as I put my hands to my face and looked up, I had all the confidence in the world that that last pass would go in," he said. "All I had to do was let God use my physical ability — the little bit I do have — to fundamentally throw it up high enough for Him to put it in the hole, which He did."

What makes his story more glorifying to God is that Bartlett is not a football player. "God threw that long pass for me. I promise you I'm no athlete at all. I had practiced some but had never come close to making that 30-yard pass at home," he said. "I had a target and everything and bought a few footballs at Wal-Mart. I've never played football. I played basketball a couple of years in college, but no football."

Bartlett's first wife Carol died of cancer three years ago. While she was hospitalized at the M.D. Anderson cancer treatment facility in Houston, Texas, he would drive back and forth between her bedside and his job as an insurance salesman in Natchez.

Bill Hurt, pastor of First Church, Natchez, told Baptist Press some women from the church often stayed with Carol in the hospital while Bartlett was away, and that ministered to Bartlett in an important way.

"When Carol died, everyone assumed he would move somewhere else because he had no family ties in Natchez," Hurt

said. "The only reason he was here was because she had family ties here. People thought he'd go back to Florida. I asked him what kept him here, and he said, 'My church family.'"

Now Bartlett is remarried, is a substitute Sunday School teacher, and serves on the budget and finance committee in addition to being a deacon. He is a Gideon, and he often does little things for people that they would never see, Hurt said, such as buying tickets for youth to attend Christian concerts.

Hurt said Bartlett had told the deacons last month that he would be participating in the contest, and he said if he won \$1 million he would pay off the church debt. Hurt said he told him not to worry about paying off the church debt as long as he tithed what he won.



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FRONT PAGE

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Moore files appeal



MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP) — Former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore filed a notice of appeal Dec. 10 with the Alabama Supreme Court he hopes will lead to his reinstatement. Moore was removed from office Nov. 13 by the state Court of the Judiciary, which said Moore violated the state's code of judicial ethics by not obeying a federal judge's order to remove a 5,300-pound Ten Commandments monument from the rotunda of the State Judicial Building. "I think it would have been a violation of my oath of office to obey an unlawful order," Moore said after filing the appeal, according to The Birmingham News. "To do what I'm sworn to do cost me my job. It's that simple." Moore's lawyers also asked the state Supreme Court's acting chief justice, German Houston, not to participate in the case, saying his actions have shown him to be biased against Moore. The Birmingham News reported. The day after Moore was removed from office, Houston fired several court employees Moore had hired, the newspaper reported. Moore has until Jan. 8 to file briefs supporting his appeal. Moore told Baptist Press in an early December interview during a visit to Nashville, Tenn., that the media "misses the issue entirely" as to what the controversy has been about. "It's about whether or not we can or must acknowledge God as the sovereign source of our law and justice system," he said, "and I think that the media, not having understanding of these things, not having an understanding of history, not having an understanding of law, not having an understanding of the Scriptures, fail to see the intimate connection — but they're not the only ones, because there are millions and millions of people who don't understand the connection between God and law, and between the history of this country and God, and why it's relevant."

Looking back

10 years ago

More than 3200 youths attend the Youth Evangelism Conference at Mississippi College in Clinton. Speaker Neil McClendon talks bluntly about immorality, and Ken Smith challenges students to be faithful on campus.

20 years ago

From the \$40,000 pledge of a local businessman to a gift of one dollar given anonymously, officers of the Woman's Missionary Union receive a variety of gifts for the relocation of the national headquarters in Birmingham.

50 years ago

The State Training Union Convention has "one of its best meetings in years" as R.G. Lee, pastor of Bellevue Church, Memphis, brings the convocation to a climatic close in the sanctuary of First Church, Jackson.

Event targets multihousing church plants

Targeting the Unchurched, a multihousing/lay church planting ministry event sponsored by the Church Planting Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, is planned for several locations across the state. Chris McNairy of the North American Mission Board in Atlanta will blitz south Mississippi on January 16-17, with stops in Hattiesburg, Pascagoula, and Brookhaven. The stated goal of the conference is to heighten awareness, equip lay church planting teams, and resource laymen to begin multihousing ministries, intentionally targeting the unchurched, according to Ed Deuschle, director of the Church Planting Department. Events are:

- January 16, 38th Avenue Church, Hattiesburg, 5:45 p.m.; call (601) 262-2771 for reservations and information.

- January 17, Jackson Association, Pascagoula, 10 a.m.; call (228) 769-7101 for reservations and information.

- January 17, Lincoln County Association, Brookhaven, 5 p.m.; call (601) 833-8111 for reservations and information.

Deadline for reservations is January 14; a meal will be provided at each location.

Approximately 487,350 of the state's two million unchurched population live in multihousing communities, and 90% are lost.

Similar tours for central Mississippi and north Mississippi are on February 6-7 and February 20-21. Details will be announced at a later date.

A "NEW" NEW YEAR!

There is something wonderful about a New Year! It seems to me that we take hold of something new, fresh, hopeful, inviting, and better than what we have just left. The New Year is ours to possess, ours to dream about, and ours to shape. We sing about it, celebrate it, shoot fireworks to welcome it, and we believe that the imaginary timeline at midnight between December 31 and January 1 is going to change everything about us!

We also make resolutions for the New Year. Surveys show that the two main things that people resolve are related to weight and finances. It is our intent to get both of them under control. Still others, who are maybe more creative and innovative, give attention to intellectual stimulation like, "I'm going to read more!" or spiritual development like, "I'm going to grow and serve the Lord more!" Some set new and high-level career goals like, "I'm going to climb several rungs on the ladder of success." Those things are not bad and they may even be good; but, more often than not, time reveals that we do not follow our resolve too far into the New Year!

Yet, the good news is that the New Year is a good thing. One of the good things about 2004 is that you can't go backwards. Everybody on this journey of life is traveling in the same direction — forward! None of us can turn back one page of time. We cannot



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

step back into the past for even an hour. While that is a wonderful thing, most of us have made decisions in the past that will affect our futures and we will have to live with some of the residue with the choices in our past.

On the other hand, let me encourage you not to pack up all the problems of 2003 and drag them into the future. Do not carry warped and wrong emotions along with you. Do not pull a sack full of rotten attitudes with you. Let that stuff stay where it ought to — locked up in the past! I can tell you that if you have come to God, turning from your hurts, failures, sins, and griefs, He is able to forgive, remove, and cancel all those things. Do not resurrect what He has put to death. Do not relive 2003. You are not permitted to walk back into that landscape.

A second glorious thing that is true about the New Year is that wherever you go, whatever you do, God is already there! He is the God of the constant presence. He is the "I AM!" He is the God who therefore resides in all of our

future. What a grand truth and what a marvelous hope that instills in us. Just think about it. God knows what we are facing even though we are in the blind.

I will tell you what we should do. We should step back and look at some years as we faced them. Look at the year 2000. Do you remember as we approached 2000 that the big "Bug-a-boo" on the horizon was Y2K? Computers were going to crash, stock markets were going to fold, banks were going to close, chaos was going to break out all across the world, transportation would stop, governments would topple, and panic would rule the world! People stockpiled water, food, ammunition, and guess what? Nothing happened! Well, nothing major or significant happened. That year we were worrying and working on something that would never take place.

Then came the year 2001 and something would happen that we didn't know would take place — "9-11"! It is forever burned into our consciousness: Twin Towers, terrorists, fire, fear, collapse,

smoke, screaming, uncertainty, and panic! Then, in 2003, only days after the New Year arrived, we watched with horror and heartbreak as the Columbia spaceship disintegrated before the eye of the television lens and seven wonderful astronauts were gone! Space flight, shuttle lift-off and landing all had become routine, until again we were reminded, it was not routine!

Sure there were many other incidents that took place over these years, but my point is to say to you and to my own heart, "Do not forget that God will be with us. We can look to Him, we can look ahead, and we can go on in life. Whatever happens, whatever tragedy strikes, whatever uncertainty surprises us, and whatever certainty shocks us we can still move forward and by His grace and in His love, we will!"

The final thought about the New Year is this: God has a plan for your life! For this year, trust Him and follow Him! As the writer of Proverbs expresses it, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths." It is true! He will guide you if you will trust Him!

So, prayerfully launch into the New Year with excitement and let God do His wonderful work through you. Happy New Year! Happy 2004!

NOBTS to offer courses in Mississippi for spring

NEW ORLEANS (Special) — New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) will hold classes in two Mississippi locations this spring. Graduate courses will be held at Mississippi College in Clinton, and Broadmoor Church in Madison will host undergraduate courses.

Classes in Clinton and Madison will begin on January 26. All graduate students who have not participated in New Student Orientation and Testing at the Clinton Center are required to attend a meeting on January 19 at 10 a.m. in Alumni Hall at Mississippi College. New undergraduate students at Broadmoor Church will meet for orientation and testing on January 19 at 2 p.m.

Returning students for both

centers who registered online must send their payment to the office at NOBTS by January 20. Students who registered by mail must have all paperwork, with payment, in the office at NOBTS by January 9. New students can register the first day of class.

Students who have been out of classes for one year or less may apply for re-enrollment by attending the first class and completing the registration form. There is an additional \$10 fee for re-enrollment.

The following graduate-level courses are offered on Mondays at various times:

- Studies in Christian Doctrine (3 hours)
- Encountering the Biblical World (3 hours)
- Pastoral Ministry (3 hours)

For Southern Baptists, these courses cost \$150 per semester hour with a maximum of \$1,675, in addition to an \$85 resource fee. For more information, contact Program Director Louis Smith at (601) 956-7448 or by email at Lsmith7458@att.net.

The following undergraduate-level courses are offered on Mondays at various times:

- Personal Spiritual Disciplines (1 hour)
- New Testament Interpretation: Acts (3 hours)
- Building Healthy Church Relationships (3 hours)
- Christian Doctrine (3 hours)

For Southern Baptists, these courses cost \$130 per semester hour with a maximum of \$1,675, in addition to an \$85 resource fee. For more information, contact

Program Director Julius Thompson at (601) 856-4341 or by email at Thompson.Julius@worldnet.att.net.

Through extension centers located all over the Southeast, New Orleans Seminary is pushing the campus out closer to the church field, making it possible for someone who may be in a ministry position to maintain that position and pursue theological education. Using non-traditional schedules and church-focused, competency-based curriculum, the extension centers provide training that encourages healthy churches.

For additional information about New Orleans Seminary's extension centers, contact Extension Center Office at (800) 514-1175 or visit online at www.nobts.edu/extensions.

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



GAs of Trinity Church, Philadelphia

Joshua Tackett was licensed to preach November 30 at Monument Drive Church, Tupelo. Pictured (from left) are Tackett and Tommy Tackett, pastor.

The GAs of Trinity Church, Philadelphia, delivered fruit bas-

kets to ten shut-ins on November 16. Wayne Hill is pastor.

The Ladies of Zion Hill Church, Wesson, and their guests enjoyed a fall retreat, Becoming Intimate With God, at the historic site, The Master's House, Hazlehurst. Angie



J. Tackett and T. Tackett, pastor Smith planned and directed the event with guest speakers, Nicki Benz of Buried Treasures Home and June Burney of Copiah Bank.

The GAs of Dumas Church, Dumas, visited with Ms. Chocolate, Gwen Williams, in Tupelo during September. Pictured (from left, clockwise) are Alesa Taylor, Katie Hatcher, Kayla Hatcher, Katie Jones, Anna Bailey, Chloe Bailey, and Carly Jones.

The GAs from Ogden Church and Hebron Church, both of Bentonia, delivered paper products to the Baptist Children's Village, Jackson, in November. They took a tour and visited with the children and staff.

Thirty of Mississippi College's (MC) students are participating in the spring semester in London. The group will leave in January and be accompanied by Ivan Parke, Professor of Christian Studies and Philosophy, and his wife,



Ladies of Zion Hill Church, Wesson



GAs of Dumas Church, Dumas

Mary Ann Parke; Teresa Floyd, Assistant Professor of Mathematics; and Dean Parks. Dean Parks is the Director of the London Semester program. The Semester involves courses at the University of London and employs three British professors in the teaching curriculum in addition to Parke and Floyd. The semester will include visits to museums, galleries, institutes, cathedrals, churches, along with other sights. When the London semester concludes in late April, the students will engage in post-semester travel that will tour all over Europe.

Mt. Zion Church, Brookhaven, will sponsor Greater Vision in concert January 23 at 7 p.m. at the Rea



Greater Vision

Auditorium, Copiah-Lincoln Community College. Tickets are \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door. For more information, call (601) 833-8018 or (601) 835-1589.

The music ministry of First Church, Laurel, will present Greater Vision in concert January 8 at 7 p.m. Randy Turner is pastor and Jimmy Little is minister of music. All are welcome. Admission is free. A love offering will be taken.

Baptist Marks 5 Year Support of Children's Asthma Camp



Pictured left to right: Baptist Health Systems President and CEO Kurt W. Metzner and American Lung Association of Mississippi Executive Director Kay Hullings

The American Lung Association of Mississippi (ALAM) honored Baptist Health Systems for the hospital's on-going sponsorship for Camp Wheez-Away, a summer camp for children ages 8 - 12 with asthma.

For the past five years, Baptist has partnered with ALAM and the Mississippi Asthma Collaborative in contributing resources and volunteers in creating a one-of-a-kind experience for Mississippi children with asthma.

The statewide camp is usually held at Camp Wesley Pines in Gallman, Miss. During the week-long camp, children enjoy a host of activities, including canoeing, hiking, and playing a variety of sports. They also learn about asthma triggers, breathing techniques, and the importance of taking medications properly. A large group of medical and other volunteers staff the camp.

Next year's camp will be held July 12-16. To learn more about Camp Wheez-Away, contact ALAM at 1-800-586-4872 or visit www.lungusa.org/mississippi.

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

GOD CHOOSES AND EQUIPS

1 Samuel 16:1-13

By Ken Anderson

There is a web site that allows people to measure themselves by the opinion of others. You can find out how attractive you are by sending a picture to the site. The internet audience will rate you on a scale of 1 to 10 (Newsweek, 12/18/00). This site is another confirmation that our culture places enormous emphasis on physical attractiveness. One of the major lessons in this study is that God values inner character more than one's outward appearance.

The lesson is set in a background of Israel's need for strong national leadership. King Saul was Israel's hope of being united, but ultimately his actions demonstrated that he would not be a successful king. Then God directed Samuel in a

process to find and anoint a new king.

Samuel, the last of the Judges, seemingly was stuck in the grief process and could not refocus his life (v. 1). It is evident that Saul and Samuel's relationship was ruptured (1 Samuel 15:35). The change in the leadership of the country could ignite a civil war, plus there was the threat of attack from hostile neighbors. Nevertheless, he was grieving in a manner that was not healthy. God intervened in his grief and gave him decisive actions to perform.

The purpose of Samuel's trip to Bethlehem was to anoint a new king from the sons of Jesse. He was instructed to fill his horn with oil. This was an animal horn that was used as a wind instrument or a container to carry oil.



Anderson

Did Samuel know that Jesse the Bethlehemite was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth? It is possible; but what he did know was that this king would come to the throne, not as the result of political subterfuge or civil war, but chosen by God Himself.

Samuel had an initial reservation about his visit to Bethlehem. He was concerned, and rightly so, that Saul would not look favorably on such treason. Besides, he would travel through Saul's hometown of Gibeah on his way to Bethlehem. To avoid his mission being detected, Samuel used as a pretext a ritual sacrifice.

For a man of Samuel's stature to visit the small town of Bethlehem immediately got the attention of the elders (v. 4). They may have thought that some transgression had been committed that would require a Judge's visit. They were relieved when Samuel said that it was a peaceful visit.

The invitation of Jesse and his sons set the stage for the selection process (v. 5). The first son to come into Samuel's view was Eliab. He quickly assumed that Eliab was the natural choice. He may have reasoned that since he was the elder son; tall and perhaps handsome, that he would project the ideal image of a king, but Samuel soon learned that outward appearance was not sufficient. God looked beyond the image and saw the heart (the thoughts, emotions, and intent of a person) (v. 7). Therefore, God rejected Eliab.

Each one of Jesse's sons passed in review before Samuel and each was rejected (vs. 8-11) save David, the youngest, who was tending sheep. Again, physical attributes are mentioned; and David's were impressive. He was a tall and handsome man. However, God directed Samuel to anoint David because of the attributes of his heart. David is described as "a man after God's own heart;" a heart that was focused on serving and loving God. Samuel's anointing of

David signified that he was being set apart for a special ministry. At that moment, the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward (v13).

INSIGHTS FROM THE TEXT:

To what degree does our culture accept superficiality over the depth of character, image over integrity and style over substance? Ed Young made the following observation: "In our culture, unless a person is handsome, intelligent, wealthy, or well born, he is in trouble." The lesson teaches that God had a plan for David, and He has a plan for every life. Samuel had the responsibility through God's direction to select the next king. Church committees have the responsibility of selecting people to serve, ideally with God's direction. What is the process of selection or nomination? As someone has said "Do we choose people like we do products, by the packaging?" Regardless of one's appearance, it is the condition of the heart that counts. How is your heart?

Anderson is pastor emeritus of First Church, Saltillo.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Way of Wisdom

Proverbs 1:1-19

By Ann Maniscalco

The old saying "Like father, like son" could be used to describe the similarities of the love relationship David and his son (now Israel's king) Solomon had with the Lord. The young ruler "showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father David..." (1 Kings 3:3). According to the Lord Jesus, such obedience is the surest test of our love for Him (John 14:15,21).

During a dream, the Lord appeared to Solomon. "Ask for whatever you want me to give you", He said (1 Kings 3:5). What an amazing offer! What would be your answer to such a "blank check" given you by God? Solomon showed incredible humility in his answer. Referring to himself as "only a little child", he requested "a discerning heart to govern [God's] people and to distinguish between right and wrong" (verses 7-9). God

was very pleased with Solomon's choice; He granted that and so much more (read verses 10-14).

THE BOOK'S PURPOSE (PROVERBS 1:1-6):

The "wise and discerning heart" God imparted to Solomon would find its way into what we have in the book of Proverbs, most of which was penned by King Solomon. The 31 chapters that comprise the book are bursting with insights for practical daily living for all Christians. New believers can drink deeply from the tenets of wisdom found therein, but even veteran Bible scholars can never fully exhaust the depths contained in the characteristic short nuggets of insightful teaching.

The tapestry of topics is woven from the thread of our daily lives: promoting family harmony, money management, relationships with others, mak-



Maniscalco

ing wise and honest business decisions, handling our emotions, avoiding evil, and reverencing God. Many believers so value the book of Proverbs that they read a chapter a day as part of their devotional time. For almost any problem we might face, we can either find

answer or a governing principle in this cherished book. Those who seek the "wisdom that comes from heaven" (James 3:17) will, according to Proverbs 1:2-6, gain discernment, knowledge, insight and discretion — all components of wisdom.

THE BOOK'S PREMISE (PROVERBS 1:7):

With this verse, Solomon begins his comparisons of two kinds of people, a method of writing we will see throughout the book. He doesn't mince words — those who reject wisdom are called "fools". In contrast, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. When we think of the word 'fear', we think of cringing in terror before someone or some-

thing. However, this is obviously not the meaning of the word in this context, because "There is no fear in love", says John (1 John 4:18), adding that God's "perfect love drives out fear." The "fear of the Lord" involves reverential awe that will result in submission and obedience. The psalmist had this in mind when he said to the Lord, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). The wise man reverences God; the fool rejects Him and His teachings.

THE BOOK'S APPROACH (PROVERBS 1:8-9):

The teachings of the book can be considered a love-gift from a mother and father who treasure their children. Although the advice is to be equally heeded by male or female, the writer pictures here a father and son having a heart-to-heart talk, as the father leads his son to see that gaining wisdom would bring about a life of blessedness and productivity. The "garland of grace" for the head reminds readers of a victory crown, which would bequeath honor

and on occasion, authority. The "[gold] chain" symbolized favor, as was bestowed on Joseph by Pharaoh (Gen. 41:42).

THE BOOK'S GUIDANCE (PROVERBS 1:10-19):

The good father continues the discourse by issuing strict warnings to help his child avoid the pull of those who would lead him astray. The enticing tactics of those choosing sinful lifestyles are ever present and very convincing in their effort to coerce others to "travel that road with them" (verse 15). The child is urged not to even "set foot on their path", as the innocent one could be swept away toward a ruined life (verse 19). As believers, we must continually "be self controlled and alert", because the enemy of our souls — the devil — "prowls about like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Choices...decisions...a fork in the road. Choosing the ways of God's wisdom as shown in Proverbs will help provide clear guidance for such times, and keep us on the right path.

Maniscalco is a member of First Church, Ocean Springs.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of **The Village View** is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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Pastor proclaims Gospel in Iraq homeland

BAGHDAD, Iraq (BP) — It would be hard to imagine a time that Maher hasn't smiled. Though short in stature, the Madian-born Iraqi lights up a room, whether it's at the hospi-



USEFUL COLLECTION — Maher Mageed looks through the large collection of master recordings of Christian programs he has taped for distribution to his Iraqi neighbors. (BP photo by Jim Veneman)

tal where he helps translate for Iraqi patients, or in his church which has now held services for 10 weeks in a row.

There was a low point in his life. It came as he was being interrogated in Saddam Hussein's military intelligence prison — the most feared prison in all of Iraq. As he heard stories of other prisoners there who had been severely tortured by the same men who were questioning him, he wondered whether he would ever see home again.

Maher Abdul Mageed was born into the Madian culture, a sect that can be traced back to the original followers of John the Baptist. Though 90% of John the Baptist's followers turned to Jesus Christ after their leader's death, some did not, choosing instead to worship John, a religion that has been passed down for generations.

Maher accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior in 1994 after first hearing the Gospel from his brother who had left Iraq for another country. Within a year, Maher felt called by God into ministry, though there was no schooling in evangelism he could obtain in Iraq. Under Saddam's dictatorship, it was extremely difficult to preach the Gospel in Iraq; it could quickly gain someone a three-year trip to prison if caught.

A father and a husband, Maher decided to start a media ministry. By collecting audio tapes, books, CDs, and videos, he reasoned it was the easiest way to preach the Gospel without being accused of specifically proselytizing for his faith. Using double-deck cassette players, he would stay up until

midnight each night taping various Christian programs. His wife would then help copy the tapes while she cooked. He was eager to share his tapes and CDs with fellow members of the church he attended, the sole Arabic evangelical church in the area where he lived.

Word began to spread throughout the church and surrounding neighborhoods about Maher's ministry, a development that concerned the local church council's several members who also belonged to the Baath Party.

"They asked me to stop my media ministry and said it was becoming a problem," Maher recounted. "I asked them, why? They were fearful that Saddam would close the church."

Over the next few months, Maher tried his best to meet the council's requests, without giving in to shutting down his ministry altogether. Still, the moment came when he was asked to do just that. The leader of the church council confronted him on everything he had been doing — from passing out tapes to printing and distributing a flyer with the plan of salvation on it.

"I told him, 'I'm not doing anything wrong,'" Maher said. "He told me, 'You don't like to obey my orders.' I just said, 'I don't like to not obey my Jesus.'" That was on Friday. The following evening, Maher was sitting in his living room chair, watching TV and eating peanuts in his pajamas and robe when someone knocked at the door.

Two men, security agents for Saddam Hussein, quickly informed him that he must not open his mouth nor make any sudden movements. A man who

had frequently borrowed tapes from Maher's ministry stood there as well. He quickly pointed to Maher and nodded to the men, leaving as quickly as he came.

Maher thought quickly and made up an excuse which got him permission to run upstairs where his wife was. He quickly told her what was happening and instructed her to hide the mountain of audio cassettes and videotapes they had brought home from the church.

In all, 10 evangelical pastors were arrested that day. Maher spent five days in a 4-by-4-meter room with five Muslims who had been accused of political crimes. When he was brought in for interrogation, a cold chill ran through his body as he was told what the charges were.

"They had been listening to the CDs I passed out," Maher said. "One of the recordings talked about a leader's integrity, and the fact that the best leaders in the world are Christians. To them, that meant I was opposing Saddam being the leader of the world. That was the lowest moment for me because I knew they had torture devices. I started praying."

Five days later, Maher was released unharmed, though many of the other pastors were imprisoned until Hussein released the prisoners right before the war began.

"Jesus filled us with more purpose," said Eman, Maher's wife. "He filled us with a great ambition to tell the people about grace and God's Good News."

Maher estimates more than 10,000 Iraqis already have been touched by his media ministry since it began.

Southern Baptists urged to respond to Iraq needs

BAGHDAD — Southern Baptists have prayed for years that Iraq would somehow be opened to the Gospel. Now Southern Baptist workers have unprecedented access to what was one of the world's most closed countries.

So what are Southern Baptists doing about it? Not enough, say International Mission Board (IMB) workers risking their lives to meet human needs and share the Gospel inside Iraq.

"I must admit I'm disappointed that we have so few workers here," said one Baghdad worker, who cannot be identified for security reasons.

While the IMB has work among almost 1,500 people groups in well over 100 countries, its inability to respond quickly and appropriately to what may be a fleeting opportunity in Iraq shows a poignant side of the board's recent financial challenges.

John Brady, leader of IMB work in the Middle East and northern Africa, admits being frustrated by the situation. "It aches my heart to see the opportunities that are before us

and know what decisions we're having to make," he said.

"Today is the day of the open door. God has opened doors, not only in Iraq but really in hundreds of spots across the Muslim world," he said. "If we're going to walk through that door, Southern Baptists have got to decide if it's worth sacrificing something."

Southern Baptists must understand that there is a war for souls underway in Iraq, Brady said. Even as Islamic leaders try to tighten their grip on the country and its people, cult groups like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are sending hundreds of their missionaries into Iraq to spread their pseudo-Christianity.

God will have His way in Iraq, Brady said. Christian workers from South Korea, Brazil and many other lands are coming to Iraq to share the Gospel. But, he said, "I am jealous to see Southern Baptists be a part of God's plan for Iraq. I am praying Southern Baptists will respond to this opportunity, because they are about seeing God's Kingdom grow. I am jealous for Southern Baptists,

not to be the only ones working, but not to be left out."

Brady urged Southern Baptists to help meet the needs in Iraq by giving sacrificially to the Lottie Moon Christmas

Offering this year.

"The only way Southern Baptists can go forward is for us to take responsibility for responding in these days of opportunity," he said.



PAUSE FOR PRAYER — Reflective of ministry opportunities in Iraq, Southern Baptist volunteers Hal Newell (left) and Larry Ledford (right) pray with a resident in a neighborhood in central Iraq to whom they have given food. (BP photo by Mike Creswell)

Bibliocipher

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PQE SA KPBE TQJN SAU,

EPTDSJAU, LA NG DNNE

ZNVGNUJ: JSM GPBJS

SPJS VPEA JSAA

CSNHA; DN BQ FAPZA.

HTRA ABDSJ:
GNUJM-ABDSJ

Clue: V = M

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John 11:42